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## Moraga Chamber president provides free business mentoring to Lamorinda through SCORE

By Vera Kochan



Larry Tessler local SCORE counselor Photo Vera

SCORE is a national organization that was established over 50 years ago to provide free small business counseling. The Virginia-based company utilizes the expert talents of 13,000 volunteers who counsel through local chapters. One of those volunteers is Moraga Chamber of Commerce President Larry Tessler.

"The Oakland chapter is No. 1 for the past year. I do most of the counseling in the area often meeting at our Moraga Starbucks. I also do the most counseling in the chapter," Tessler said. "I have served most every position in the chapter over the 20 years I've been doing this volunteer work. I currently serve on our executive committee, and I run our Facebook page."

SCORE's website (www.score.org) states that it has provided mentorship to more than 11 million entrepreneurs through the years, with the greater Bay Area boasting five chapters located in San Jose, San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Oakland, and over 300 chapters nationwide. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Tessler estimates that he's mentored approximately 2,500 small business entrepreneurs during his tenure with SCORE. His business background goes back many years from working in the retail industry with stores such

as Emporium-Capwell, Mervyn's and Rainbow Records. He became semi-retired when he and his wife, Carol, opened their own successful sign making business in Walnut Creek. After five years they sold the company and decided to spend their retirement traveling.

Tessler and his wife have long served the Lamorinda area through volunteer work. "We don't have kids, so our greatest satisfaction is seeing people succeed. I feel like I've played a small part in it," he said, adding, "I'm a little bit nuts. I like to remain busy."

He was approached by a friend to attend a SCORE session. "I came to a chapter meeting to see what SCORE was all about and was hooked." He was assigned a coach and began doing co-counseling.

Tessler gives clients business planning directions, general legal advice and patent related instruction. He keeps abreast of the latest trends by combing through online articles and taking seminars to keep up with concepts and techniques.

When seeking advice any potential client is matched with a counselor that meets their needs. While one-on-one counseling (in person, by email or phone) is free, SCORE does offer a variety of webinars and local events for a moderate fee. The workshops have different modules that deal with legal aspects, advertising, social media, retail basics, export/import, accounting, acquiring financial backing and opening a restaurant.

To contact the local East Bay SCORE chapter visit www.eastbayscore.org or call (510)273-6611.

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